

Proposed Improvements to Piping Rock Memorial Park & Martello Field Frequently Asked Questions

What is being proposed?

The Borough of Rumson is proposing to improve the use of Piping Rock Memorial Park and Martello Field by converting the baseball field and a portion of the small lacrosse/youth football practice field into a regulation size, all-weather, multi-sport, synthetic turf field. The proposed field would be able to accommodate soccer, lacrosse, flag football, tackle football practice, field hockey, school teams, and other activities for youth and adults. The tennis courts would remain as they are and the playground would be relocated to the east end of the current lacrosse field. Maintaining the beauty and neighborhood feel of the park is a high design priority.

Why is a turf field being proposed in Rumson?

Recent years have seen a growth in field demand from school, recreation and travel programs, including programming demand for ever younger residents: e.g., a growth in the number of programs, number of participants per program, and the amount of field hours per program, as well as a trend toward year-round sports' practices/games. The result is that field demand far exceeds the supply of available field space in Rumson. The Borough of Rumson and the surrounding Two River area is fully developed and there is very little land for open space, yet the demand for fields is increasing; thus, the Borough must search for new and creative ways to increase the amount of open space available for passive and active recreation.

Rumson Boro provides playing fields for the local schools, Rumson Recreation, travel teams, adult leagues, tournaments, private trainers and passive recreational use. During peak use this adds up to over 3000 participants per week, leading to congested parking lots, crowded fields, and no rest time for our fields. This causes extreme stress and rapid wear on our grass fields, which is both a safety concern and unsightly.

In addition, our programs experience a significant number of weather cancellations and it is difficult to reschedule missed games and practices as the assigned field schedule has limited open time slots to accommodate make-ups. A synthetic turf field allows play in all weather, except for lightning or heavy rain.

When did the idea for a public synthetic turf in Rumson first come up?

RFH Regional High School installed a synthetic turf for the 2006 season. The all-weather field has allowed RFH to stay competitive with other schools and increase playing time for teams. Prior to the Borden Stadium at Two River Times Field, only football was allowed to host games and practice on the high school field. Today, the turf allows RFH to host games in all school-sponsored field sports, not just football, and also provides an all-weather outlet for youth sports, Rec-sponsored summer sports camps, and general recreation for neighborhood children during non-peak periods.

In 2012 the Recreation Commission considered converting **Martello Field**, the small grass practice field on River Road, into a synthetic turf surface, but investigation revealed that this was not a cost effective solution for a small sized field and would not satisfy the Borough's predominant need, which is for a regulation size, all weather field that can withstand a significant amount of heavy use.

The idea to convert **Piping Rock Memorial Field** into a regulation size synthetic turf field was proposed in 2013. The Borough then vetted the idea at the Rec Commission and Borough Council levels and T&M

Proposed Improvements to Piping Rock Memorial Park & Martello Field Frequently Asked Questions

Associates drew up preliminary plans. A public hearing was held on Sep 9, 2014, and a \$250,000 grant proposal was submitted to Monmouth County Municipal Open Space Grant Program on September 17, 2014. The grant was awarded in January 2015. In September 2015 the Borough filed a Phase II application for an additional \$136,000 in matching funds, with notification of any potential award in January 2016.

Why locate the turf at Piping Rock Memorial Field?

Piping Rock Memorial Field is centrally located in town, adjacent to commercial businesses, residences and close to the schools. The area is surrounded by sidewalks, increasing the traveling safety for many neighborhood children to walk or ride their bikes to the Park and largely avoid busy Ridge and Rumson roads. In addition, the Piping Rock and Martello Memorial playing fields are regularly used at or near capacity, so the area is accustomed to frequent sports activity in this park.

Another consideration is the relative quality of Martello Field, currently used primarily as a small lacrosse field and youth football practice field. Piping Rock Bottling plant was located here years ago thus the field is difficult to maintain relative to the Borough's other grass fields.

Will the entire park be converted to synthetic turf?

No. A regulation size, multi-use field is proposed from the Forrest Ave parking lot and would extend approximately to the current location of the playground. The remainder of the park, including the east end of Martello Field, would be natural grass enhanced by beautiful, specimen-quality trees and shrubs. The area along the south fence line adjacent to the turf would also be natural grass.

Will the Playground be moved?

Yes. The playground would be refurbished and relocated to the east end of Martello Field. It would be surrounded by natural grass and specimen trees in a beautiful, accessible and open location.

Will the batting cage be moved?

Yes. The batting cage would be relocated to Meadow Ridge Park, centrally located in the park behind the main building, easily accessible to the three baseball fields located in Meadow Ridge Park.

What will happen to the Piping Rock Memorial Baseball Field?

The proposed turf field is designed to accommodate regulation lacrosse, soccer, field hockey and practice football field (no goal posts) and thus the baseball field in this location would be eliminated.

Will there be a replacement 46/60 baseball field constructed?

The Recreation Commission has recommended that the existing Riverside North 46/60 baseball diamond be utilized as a dedicated 46/60 Little League field during the spring season, with a clay mound, grass infield and (temporary) outfield fence. The outfield fence would be removed in the Fall season to accommodate soccer. Further, in the Fall of 2014 Meadow Ridge South baseball field had cement dugouts installed and the drainage improved. Historically, Meadow Ridge South has been underutilized and the Commission believes this field can be better utilized to compensate for the elimination of the Piping Rock baseball diamond.

Will there be a 50/70 Baseball Field in Rumson?

Proposed Improvements to Piping Rock Memorial Park & Martello Field

Frequently Asked Questions

Yes. The current Piping Rock Memorial baseball field is a 46/60 diamond convertible to a 50/70 field. Another field would serve as a convertible 46/60 and 50/70 field, likely Meadow Ridge West, which would be accessible both spring and fall and near the batting cage.

What is the current demand for a 50/70 size baseball field?

A 50/70 field is used by 11&12 year old travel baseball teams. Currently, there are two resident travel baseball teams with approximately 14 children each who use a 50/70 field. Recreation does not currently use 50/70 field for any of its divisions and the Borough has had no non-resident permit requests for use of a 50/70 field. Despite the limited demand, the Borough would convert an existing field to be playable for both 46/60 and 50/70 size requirements.

Where will RFHRHS play softball?

Rumson-Fair Haven Regional High School currently has one softball team, which would play at Meadow Ridge West ("MRW"). Thus, MRW would serve the same groups as Piping Rock baseball field currently serves.

Will the Tennis Courts be razed?

No. Razing the tennis courts was never considered. The two tennis courts would remain in their current form and location.

Will the Martello Family Memorial be relocated?

No. The Martello Family Memorial would remain in its current location between the tennis courts and the east end of Martello Field, in front of the new playground.

Will the K. D. McHeffey Memorial be relocated?

Yes. The K. D. McHeffey Memorial would be moved to a more prominent location at the entrance of the proposed field, approximately 50 feet from its current location and in consultation with the donors.

Will the new field be Green Acres?

Yes. All Rumson Borough parks are Green Acres and have held that designation since the 1970s.

What does it mean for a field to be designated Green Acres?

If the development or acquisition of any municipal parklands were funded in whole or part with Green Acres public funding, all municipal parklands are then subject to the Green Acres Program regulations, including providing all residents of New Jersey reasonable access to the facilities. All Rumson parks are subject to Green Acres Program regulations and have been since the 1970s.

Does Green Acres give non-residents equal access to the fields?

Under a Green Acres Program designation any member of the public, resident or non-resident, must be provided reasonable access to a facility. However, as with all Borough fields, organized teams and activities would require a Borough-issued permit. Resident teams/activities may have priority access to permits, as long as reasonable access is allowed to all applicants. In addition, the Borough may deny permit requests from various public and private parties each year due to a shortage of field time or incompatible use. The Borough is also permitted to close fields for rest or maintenance.

Proposed Improvements to Piping Rock Memorial Park & Martello Field Frequently Asked Questions

Do you expect heavier auto traffic with a turf field?

No. In fact, auto congestion could improve. Currently, it is not unusual to have four different sports teams, their coaches and spectators at Martello lacrosse field and Piping Rock baseball field, resulting in 100 or more people at the park at one time. Under the proposed plan, there would be additional parking created by adding spaces to the current Carton Street lot – this would not change the current footprint of the lot -- and also extending the parking in front of the tennis courts on River Road, which is well screened with mature landscaping. This should also help relieve the congested street parking during the school day.

Will the reconfigured park have a stadium-like feel?

No. A critical goal of the project is to maintain a bucolic, local park feel. Specimen trees and shrubbery would be planted, border areas and the proximate playground area would be grass. Attractive privacy fencing and trees will be installed in border areas shared with residences. Spectator viewing stands would be the equivalent of what is currently used now, appropriate for a park in a residential area. Further, *no permanent lines would be stitched into the turf*, rather lines would be painted on seasonally using an eco-friendly water-based paint. It is anticipated that in the spring, girls and boys lacrosse lines and soccer lines would be painted on; in the summer, there would be no lines, but portable goals put up to facilitate passive recreation; in the fall, soccer lines and lines for football practice would be painted on (note, no tackle football games would be played here, only practice). Maintaining aesthetics consistent with Rumson standards is a high priority.

Will there be lighting?

Currently, there is lighting used by American Youth Football, which was paid for and installed by AYF with the town's permission in 2009. This is used in the Fall months starting in late September through early November to allow for weeknight practices until 9.30pm. In the Phase II MCOS grant proposal, Rumson is proposing adding conduits so that lighting could possibly be installed at a future date, but would not be installed at this point. It is anticipated that AYF, the only current users of lighting, could either repurpose their existing lights or use generator-power lighting towers during the approximately 6 weeks in the Fall it is necessary. If permanent lighting were installed at some future date, there would be restrictions on use in deference to the neighbors. Installation of lighting is not part of the current plan.

Are Their Alternatives to Recycled Rubber Pellets as Infill?

Yes, there are several natural alternatives being used today, including virgin rubber pellets. If the project is approved, the infill decision will be made based on recommendations from the experts using the latest environmentally friendly technology.

How will the turf be funded?

The project has been designed in two phases. It is estimated that the entire project cost for both phases would amount to approximately \$1.4 million. The Borough has applied for and been awarded \$250,000 in matching funds from the Monmouth County Open Space Grant Committee for Phase I. The Borough anticipates applying for additional funds in a Phase II MCOS Grant application in September 2015. The remainder would be sought from public and private contributions in the future.

When was this specific project initiated?

The concept of putting an all weather turf at Piping Rock was first proposed in 2013. Phase I Monmouth County Open Space Grant Application was written in the Summer of 2014. There was a public hearing on

Proposed Improvements to Piping Rock Memorial Park & Martello Field Frequently Asked Questions

September 9, 2014. The Grant was submitted in September 2014 and the award was announced in January 2015.

What are the Next Steps in the Process?

The Council approved submitting a Phase 2 MCOS grant application in September 2015. If the project is awarded funding, the Council will then review the project more comprehensively and the Borough engineer will draw up a detailed plan, including more precise costs. At that point, at least one more public hearing will be held and the Council will consider whether or not to move forward. If approved, the project will be put out for bid and it is anticipated that construction would take place in May 2017 at the earliest. Submitting the grant applications and being awarded the funds does not definitively mean the project will move forward to completion.

Has the Installation of a Synthetic Turf Field at Piping Rock already been approved?

No. The Recreation Commission made a recommendation to the Council in 2013 that they consider the installation of a synthetic turf field at the Piping Rock Memorial Field location. A needs study was completed and it was determined that a creative solution would be beneficial to meet the rapidly rising demand in field activities. The Council then authorized preliminary engineering reports and architectural drawings to determine scope and cost. A decision was made to apply to the Monmouth County Open Space Grant for matching funds. Given the cost, it was determined that the project and grant application would cover two phases, with an application submitted in September 2014 and September 2015, pending Council approval after the Open Hearings on these applications. Next Steps are described in the prior question.

November 2015